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SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

NEIL GAIMAN
MARC HEMPEL
D'ISRAELI

THE SANDMAN™

THE KINDLY ONES

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I wish I could be certain that I was doing the right thing.

LuX

MEN AT WORK

Hello.

Might I talk to the owner?

Look, I know this is the right place.

My people. They told me this was where I should come in order to talk to him.

I've come rather a long way.

I seek the Star of the Morning. Do you understand me?

Thank you.

REMIEL.

ISN'T IT A LITTLE EARLY IN THE DAY TO BE PAYING SOCIAL CALLS?

The early bird catches the worm, Star of Morning.

The, um, worm that dieth not, in this case. Eh? Haha...

HOW REMARKABLY FUNNY, REMIEL. NOT ACTUALLY ***ORIGINAL*** THOUGH, OF COURSE.

SO, YOU'RE IN CHARGE DOWN IN MY OLD HAUNTS, EH? I WONDER WHO THE GREAT-AND-POWERFUL HAS SET OVER THOSE WHO RISE, IN YOUR ABSENCE.

I-- I am not in *sole* charge, Morningstar. I rule in tandem with the angel Duma.

MY MISTAKE. OF ***COURSE*** YOU DO. AND I'M SURE YOU JUST CAN'T ***SHUT*** DUMA ***UP***. IT MUST BE JUST ***BRIMMING OVER*** WITH CO-MONARCH-ICAL ADVICE.

Duma is still silent.

JUST SITS THERE AND PLAYS WITH MY OLD FRONT-DOOR KEY, AND ***WATCHES*** YOU, EH?

AND NEVER SAYS A THING. I BET THAT DRIVES YOU ***QUITE*** MAD.

NO, FORGET I SAID THAT. IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS. "THERE'S SO MUCH GOOD IN THE WORST OF US," AND ALL THAT.

Yes. Well.

I...I'm very *pleased* with the progress we're making in Hell. I feel we're moving towards something that's genuinely *redemptive*.

The flames of Hell *must* be seen as refining fires, *in my* opinion...

OF *COURSE* THEY MUST; AND WHAT AN EXCITING AND INNOVATIVE OPINION YOURS MUST BE. WHAT A *SWEET* IDEA.

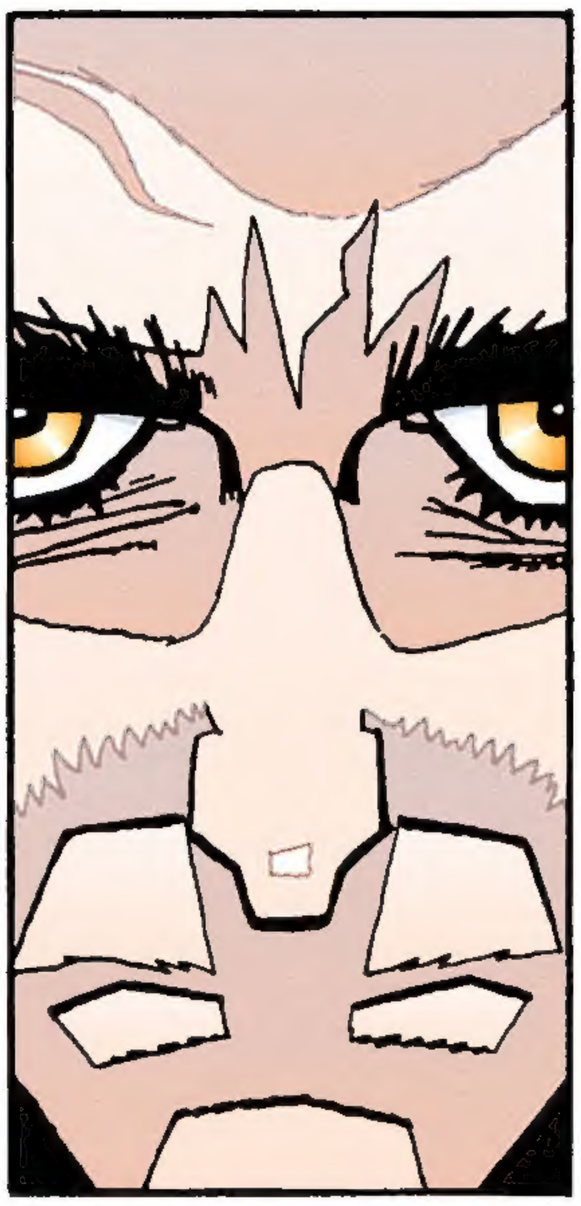
SO. YOU'RE HAVING A WONDERFUL TIME, *AND* YOU'VE BEEN REDECORATING. I'M *THRILLED*.

Certainly. We are fulfilling the wishes of our creator. What *more* could any being wish for?

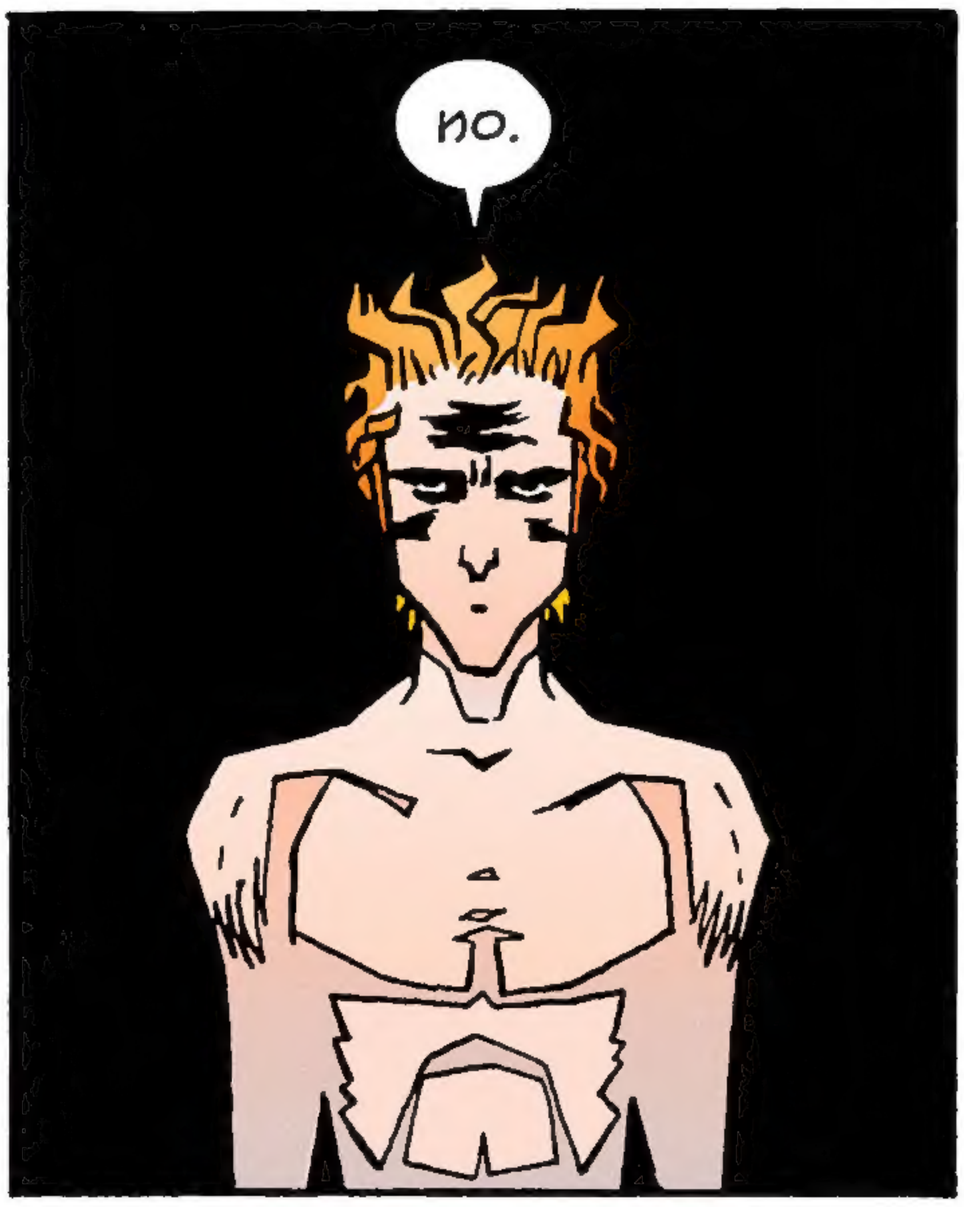
WHAT INDEED?

SO YOU AREN'T SITTING AROUND DOWN THERE GOING, "OH, IF *ONLY* LUCIFER WOULD COME BACK AND TAKE THIS SHIT-PIT OFF OUR HANDS AND LET *US* RETURN TO THE GENTLE CONTEMPLATIVE ECSTASY OF THE SILVER CITY?"

Have you ever thought about ...returning?



AHAHAHAHAHAH!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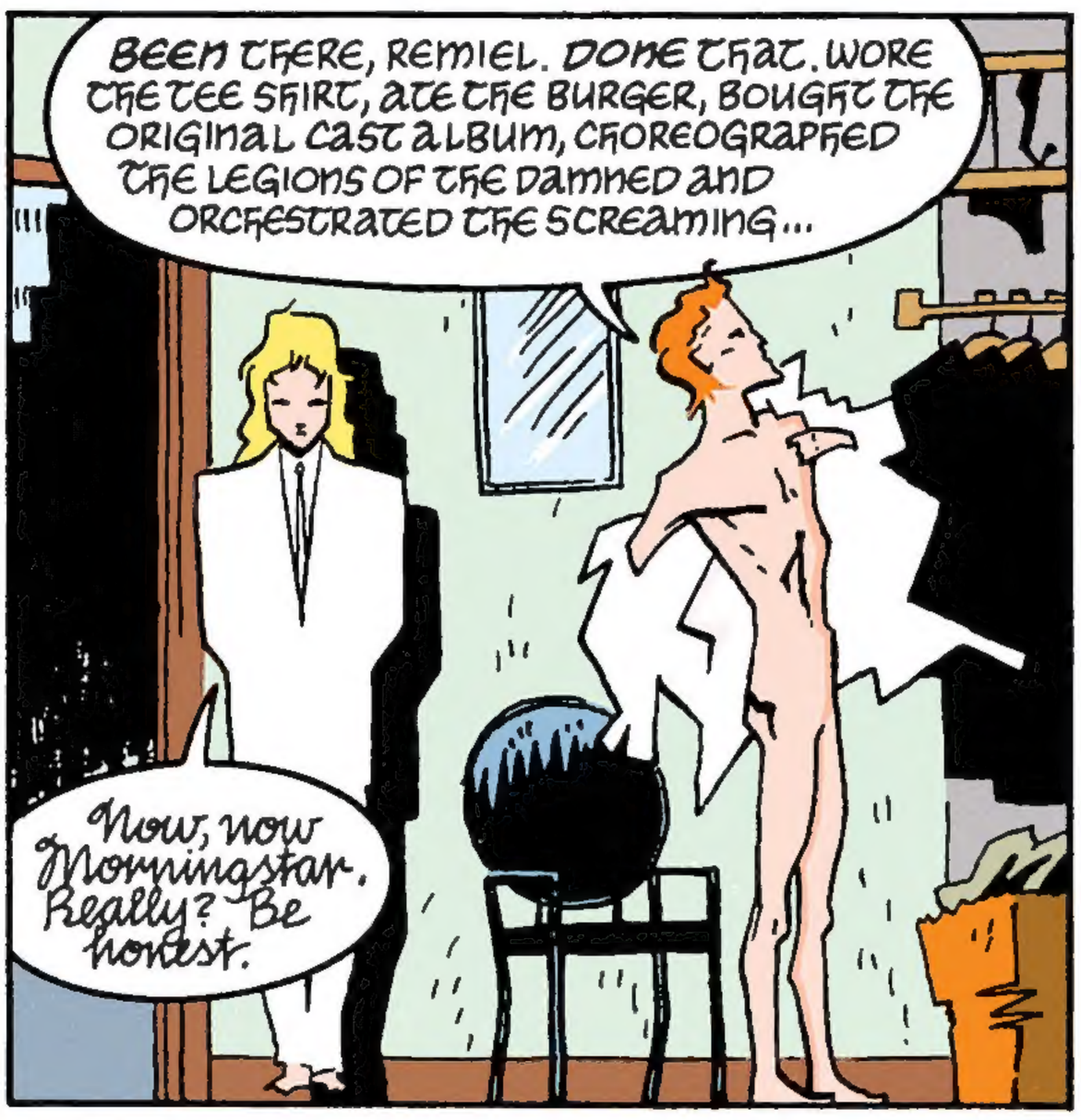
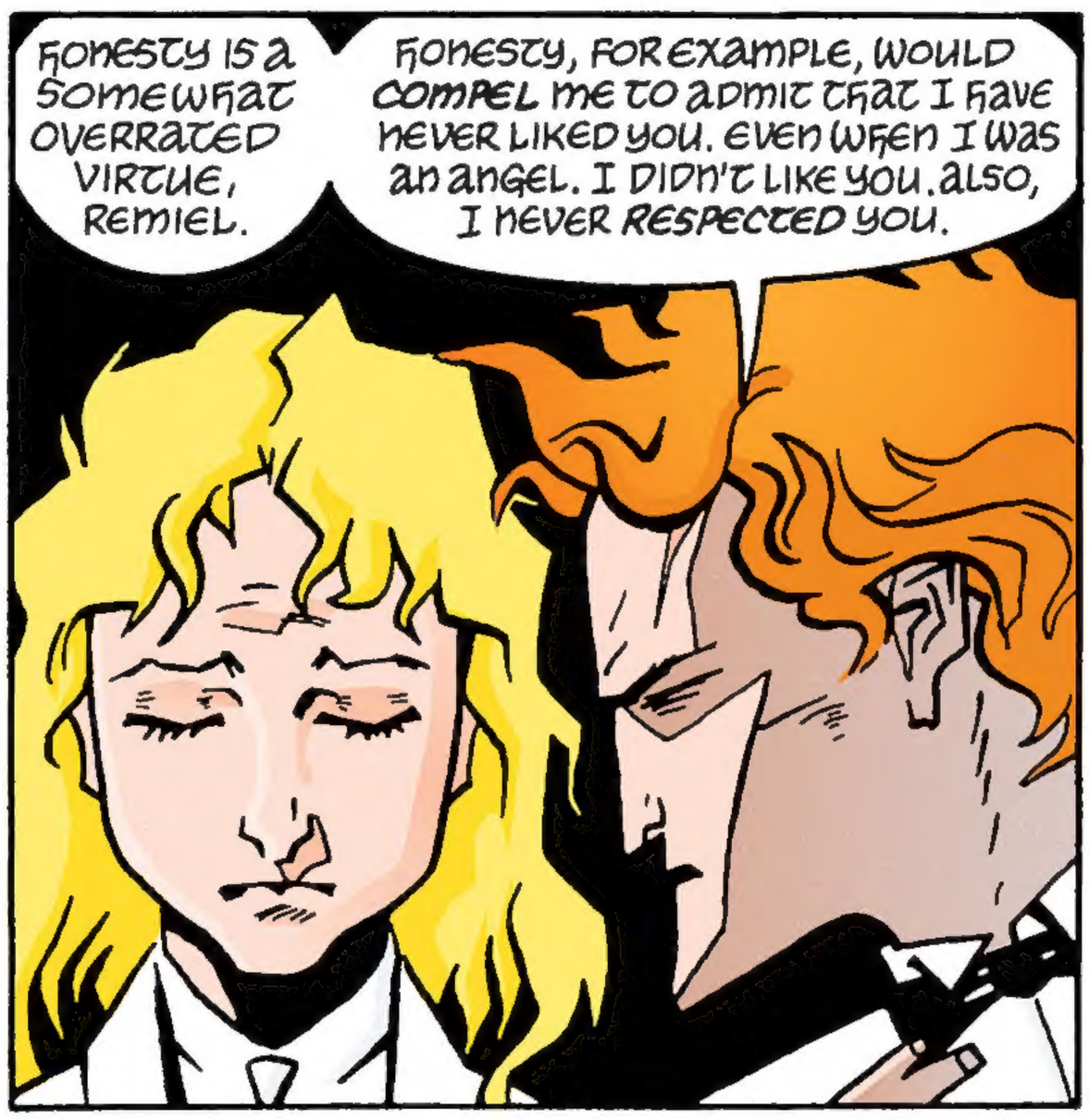
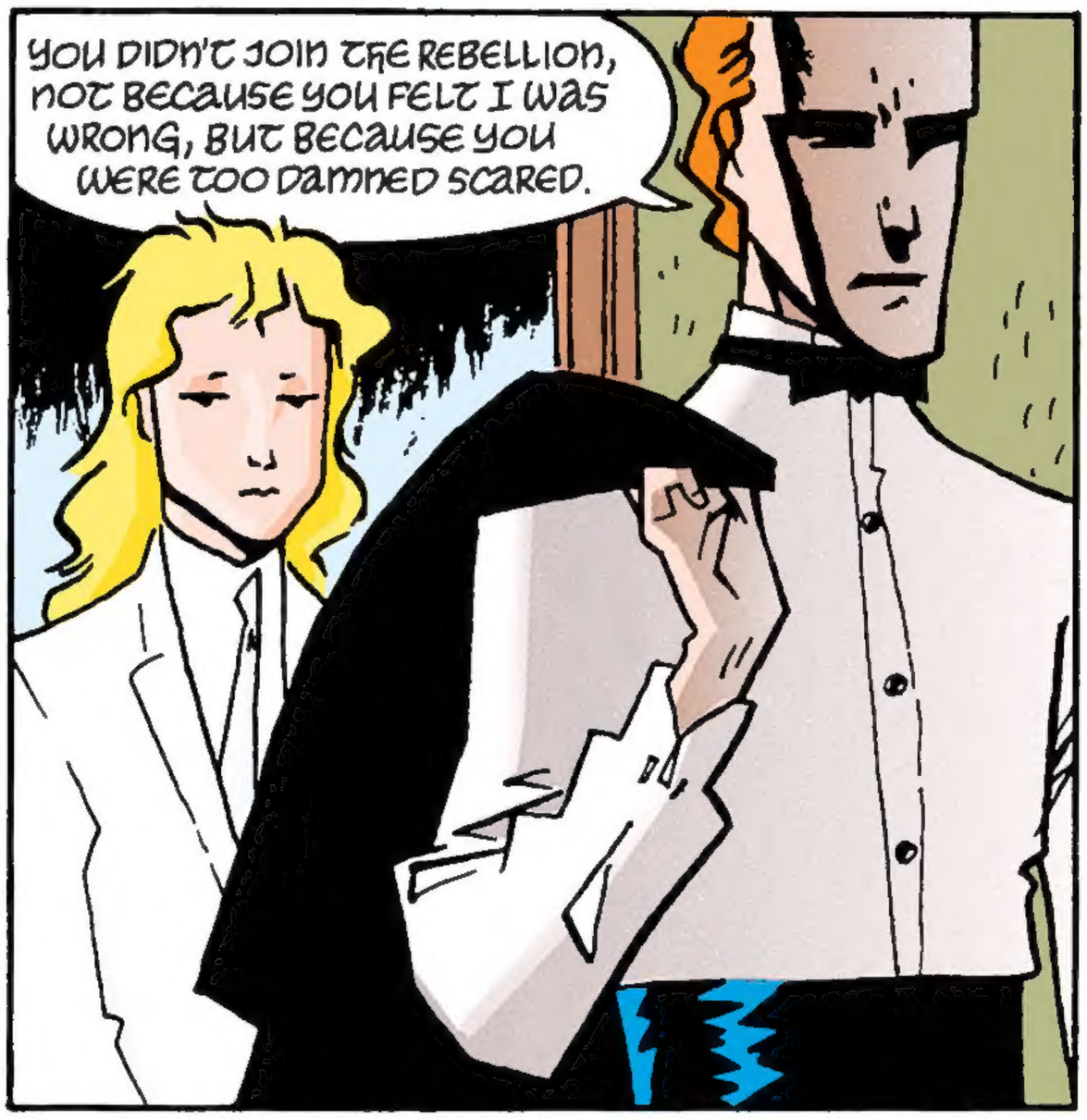
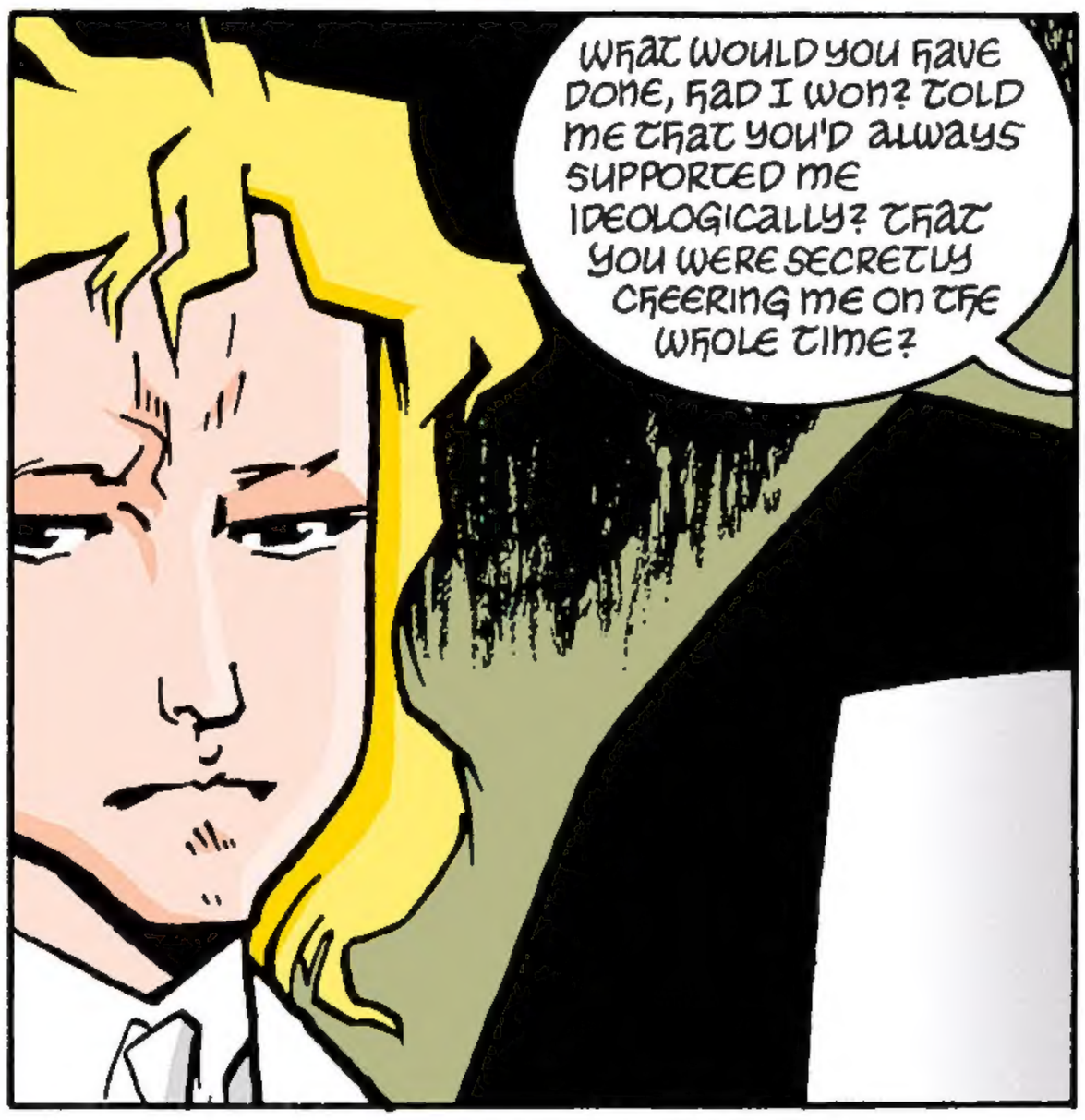

BEEN THERE, REMIEL. DONE THAT. WORE THE TEE SHIRT, ATE THE BURGER, BOUGHT THE ORIGINAL CAST ALBUM, CHOREOGRAPHED THE LEGIONS OF THE DAMNED AND ORCHESTRATED THE SCREAMING...
Now, now Morningstar. Really? Be honest.


HONESTY IS A SOMEWHAT OVERRATED VIRTUE, REMIEL.
HONESTY, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD COMPEL ME TO ADMIT THAT I HAVE NEVER LIKED YOU. EVEN WHEN I WAS AN ANGEL. I DIDN'T LIKE YOU. ALSO, I NEVER RESPECTED YOU.


YOU DIDN'T JOIN THE REBELLION, NOT BECAUSE YOU FELT I WAS WRONG, BUT BECAUSE YOU WERE TOO DAMNED SCARED.


WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE, HAD I WON? TOLD ME THAT YOU'D ALWAYS SUPPORTED ME IDEOLOGICALLY? THAT YOU WERE SECRETLY CHEERING ME ON THE WHOLE TIME?

TELL ME, REMIEL...

WHAT DID YOU DO WHEN THE ORDER CAME FOR YOU TO SPREAD YOUR WINGS AND REIGN IN HELL? DID YOU WHIMPER? DID YOU WAIL?

SOMEHOW, I CONFESS I FIND MYSELF CERTAIN THAT DUMA WAS THE ONE ACTUALLY TO TAKE THE KEY.

DUMA ALWAYS STRUCK ME AS HAVING SOME BACKBONE...

REMIEL...

YOU KNOW, WHEN I GAVE UP HELL, I GAVE UP NONE OF MY POWERS, NONE OF MY SKILLS.

I WAS THE CAPTAIN OF THE HOST OF HEAVEN. LATER, I WAS THE ADVERSARY.

NOW AT PRESENT, IT IS TRUE, I AM A SIMPLE, PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL.

BUT IF I COULD WIPE OUT YOUR EXISTENCE WITH AS FEW CONSEQUENCES AS I WIPED YOUR SPITTLE FROM MY FACE...

YOU WOULD NO LONGER EXIST.

I COULD DO IT.

I CHOOSE NOT TO.

GO NOW. I WILL TALK TO YOU NO FURTHER.

PSYCHOTIC REACTIONS

Well, that was a complete and entire failure.

We didn't even begin to talk about the Dream King situation.

The Morningstar made me so... angry, Duma. I couldn't talk to him further. I thought it wiser simply to walk away.

And if you want to deal with him...

You can damned well talk to him.

THE KINDLY ONES #4

WRITTEN BY
NEIL GAIMAN

DRAWN BY
MARC HEMPEL

INKED BY
D'ISRAELI

LETTERED BY:
TODD KLEIN
COLORED BY:
DANIEL VOZZO
COLOR SEPS BY:
ANDROID IMAGES
EDITED BY:
KAREN BERGER
ASSOCIATED BY:
SHELLY ROEBERG

SANDMAN CHARACTERS CREATED BY: GAIMAN, KIETH & DRINGENBERG

HOLA! HOW NOW, LASS, AND WHAT WOULD YOU BE QUESTING AFTER, IN THIS FORSAKEN LAND?

I'M GOING TO FIND REVENGE. DO YOU KNOW WHERE IT IS?

AHA! POWERFUL LONG WAY, OR SO I'M TOLD. OVER THAT HILL, PERHAPS? AND WHY WOULD YOU BE A-SEEKING REVENGE, LADY?

MY SON IS DEAD.

ALAS! AND WHAT MANNER OF REVENGE WOULD YOU BE SEEKING?

MY MOTHER WAS BLESSED BY THE THREE LADIES WITH THE SCORPION WHIPS. THE FURIES--

HUSH! YOU MUSTN'T TALK ABOUT THEM LIKE THAT.

WHY NOT?

ZOUNDS! BECAUSE THEY DON'T LIKE IT, I SUPPOSE. WOULD YOU?

I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T THINK SO.

DO YOU WANT TO COME WITH ME?

NAY! I CANNOT. MY TRUE LOVE'S IMPRISONED IN A HIGH TOWER, AND I HAVE TO SET HIM FREE.

THAT'S TERRIBLE.

AYE! BUT NOT HOPELESS. I'VE A BRASS FISH THAT WILL SING HIS GUARDS TO SLEEP,

AN ACORN THAT WILL GROW A LADDER IN A MOMENT, IF I PLANT IT AND WATER IT WITH MY OWN TEARS,

A COMB THAT WILL TURN INTO A FOREST IF THEY PURSUE US.

ACH! BUT HERE, LASS, TAKE THIS COIN.

IT COULD BRING YOU GOOD LUCK.

WHERE ART Y'GOING OF, LI'L LADY?

I'M GOING TO FIND MY REVENGE. I'M GOING TO LOOK IN A CAVE FOR THE, UM, THE FURIES...

UH-UH-UH-UH-*UH!* MUSTN'T *NEVER* CALL THEM THAT. *BAD* IDEA.

EVEN THE GODS'RE SCARED OF THEM, Y'KNOW.

REALLY?

A'COURSE. THEY WERE AROUND *BEFORE* THE GODS, Y'SEE. THE OLD REVENGERS. YOU'LL NEED TO CROSS THAT FOREST AND KEEP WALKING.

DO YOU WANT TO COME WITH ME?

CAN'T, MY DUCKLING. HAVE TO STAY HERE. I'M UNDER AN ENCHANTMENT. HAVE TO WAIT HERE UNTIL THE SEVENTH SON OF A SEVENTH SON COMES BY, CARRYING A WHITE ROSE AND A GOLDEN WHISTLE.

ONLY *THEN* WILL I RETURN TO MY TRUE FORM, TO BE REUNITED WITH MY SEVEN POOR SONS, AND MY FAITHLESS HUSBAND THE KING.

OH, YOU *POOR* THING. WELL, I HOPE ONE TURNS UP *SOON*.

PUSH BUTTON TO CROSS

WHAT'S YOUR *SORROW*, YOUNG LADY?

THEY BURNED MY SON TO DEATH.

THEY LEFT HIM CHARRED AND BURNT IN THE DESERT.

I'M SEEKING *REVENGE*.

AND *WHERE* WOULD YOU BE A-SEEKING OF IT?

IN GREECE. MY MOTHER'S LAND.

I'M OFF TO FIND THE... THE...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO *CALL* THEM ANY MORE. THE LADIES.

AH.

THE *LADIES*. INDEED. WELL, YOU COULD CALL THEM THE *NICE* LADIES. OR THE *KIND* LADIES. THEY LIKE THAT ONE.

I SUPPOSE. BUT THEY'RE REALLY THE...

UH-UH. *DON'T* SAY IT.

DO YOU WANT TO COME *WITH* ME, KITTY-CAT?

I CAN'T. I'M ON MY WAY TO THAT CASTLE. IT'S OWNED BY A SHAPE-CHANGING OGRE.

I INTEND TO WAGER THE SILVER COLLAR AROUND MY NECK THAT THE OGRE CANNOT CHANGE ITSELF INTO THREE THINGS THAT I SHALL NAME FOR IT.

WILL THE *THIRD* SHAPE BE A *MOUSE*?

OF COURSE.

BUT... DON'T THEY *EVER* LEARN?

THEY *CAN'T*. THEY'RE PART OF THE STORY, JUST AS I AM.

SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR SON.

HIS NAME WAS DANIEL.

I'M... I'M VERY TIRED.

UH.

UH. UH. UHHHH.

I LOVE YOU. GOD I LOVE YOU, YOU BASTARD.

UHHHHH. JESUS. OHH YES. AHHHAAH.

OHHHHHHHHH YEHHHHSSSSS...

MMMMM.

HEY.

OKAY. YOU. DON'T THINK I DON'T SEE YOU UP THERE.

WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?

GODDAMN PERVERT.

POP

OHH I UHHH. UHH. MM. HM. AH.

I WAS. UHH. I. UHH. WUHWUH WELL. FUH FUNNY YUH YOU SHOULD ASK, UM, BUH-BUHBUT I WAS, UM, UP HERE, UHH, WUHWELL, BECAUSE. UM.

I'M NOT. RUHREALLY. HERE. UH.

YOU WERE WATCHING ME.

YOU WERE WATCHING ME WHILE I WAS--

OH, JESUS CHRIST!

BANG!

BANG!

BANG!

BDAM! BDAM! BDAM!

HI, ROSE.

OH I UH...

I'M CARLA. LYTA'S FRIEND. FROM UPSTAIRS. REMEMBER?

OH. SURE. HI...

JEEZ. I WAS HAVING THIS DREAM LIKE YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE. I MEAN, A REALY'KNOW, WEIRDY. STARTED OUT HORNY AS HELL. ONE OF THOSE. I WAS WITH MY EX.

WE WERE SCREWING LIKE WEASELS IN HEAT.

AND THEN I REALIZED THERE WAS THIS FAT GUY UPON THE WARDROBE. HE WAS PEEKING AT ME. I JUST FELT SO BETRAYED.

IT WAS JUST A DREAM.

I KNOW.

WELL, I HOPE HIS EYES FALL OUT. PEEPING IN MY FUCKING DREAM LIKE THAT.

I COULD HAVE DIED.

LISTEN, ROSE, HAVE YOU SEEN ANYTHING OF LYTA SINCE YESTERDAY?

I DON'T KNOW WHERE SHE IS.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE STAYING WITH HER.

YEAH, WELL, WE HAD A KIND OF ARGUMENT LAST NIGHT AND I JUST THOUGHT TO HELL WITH IT. I OWED MYSELF A NIGHT OF REAL SLEEP, AND SHE WAS ACTING SO CRAZY.

AND THEN TODAY I THOUGHT, *GIRL*, IF *YOUR* KID WAS STOLEN, *YOU'D* BE NUTS *TOO*. AND SHE'S YOUR *FRIEND*. YOU GET *STRAIGHT* BACK UP THERE THIS MINUTE AND YOU DO WHATEVER HAS TO BE DONE TO MAKE THINGS *RIGHT*.

BUT SHE'S NOT *UP* THERE.

IS THERE ANY NEWS OF THE KID YET?

UH-UH.

JESUS.

I KEEP THINKING IT'S MY RESPONSI*BIL*ITY. IF I HADN'T FALLEN ASLEEP LIKE THAT. I WAS MEANT TO BE LOOKING *AFTER* DANNY...

IT WASN'T YOUR *FAULT*.

I DIDN'T *SAY* IT WAS MY FAULT. I SAID IT WAS MY RESPONSIBILITY. I *KNOW* THE DIFFERENCE. YOU WANT *COFFEE*?

GOD, YES.

SO, WHAT DID THE COPS SAY?

WHAT DID *WHAT* COPS SAY?

YOU KNOW. FRIDAY AND GANNON. WHATEVER THEIR NAMES ARE. DIDN'T THEY TAKE A *STATEMENT* FROM YOU? THEY SAID THEY WERE GOING TO. WANTED TO KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU.

NOBODY'S SPOKEN TO ME.

THEY WANTED TO KNOW IF YOU WERE DOING ANY DRUGS.

I FELL *ASLEEP*. THAT WAS ALL. I'VE NEVER FALLEN ASLEEP LIKE THAT...

I JUST DON'T *REMEMBER* ANYTHING. I PUT HIM TO BED, SAT DOWN, THEN LYTA WAS SHAKING ME AWAKE AND SAYING DANIEL WAS GONE.

LOOK, KID. YOU MUSTN'T JUST--

I'M *NOT* A KID, CARLA. I'M **25**, FOR CHRISSAKES. NEARLY **26**. I JUST LOOK YOUNGER THAN I AM, IS ALL. WANNA SEE MY DRIVER'S LICENSE?

25? WOW. SO WHAT'S YOUR *SECRET*, ROSE WALKER?

WHAT'S MY SECRET? HEY, I'VE GOT A MILLION OF 'EM.

HASN'T *EVERYBODY?*

YOU MIND IF I PUT ON THE *TV?* I GOTTA SET THE *VCR*--IT'S A *ROSEANNE* RERUN IN A COUPLE OF MINUTES. I'M TRYING TO TAPE 'EM FOR SOMETHING I'M WRITING.

GO FOR IT.

I'M COLLECTING THEM. AND THE *ADDAMS FAMILY*. AND *BEWITCHED*.

I WENT UP THERE, YOU KNOW. THE DAY AFTER. I TRIED TO SAY HOW *SORRY* I WAS, HOW *BAD* I FELT. IT WAS LIKE SHE HARDLY EVEN KNEW I WAS THERE.

ROS

SHE'S... ***LISTEN,*** YOU DON'T GO THROUGH WHAT SHE'S BEEN THROUGH WITHOUT GETTING KIND OF WEIRD.

I DON'T KNOW. I'VE KNOWN PEOPLE GO THROUGH *PRETTY* WEIRD THINGS AND COME OUT THE OTHER SIDE. REMIND ME TO TELL YOU ABOUT MY FAMILY TREE SOME TIME.

CLIK

DON'T GET ME STARTED ON *FAMILIES*. MY COUSIN ERIC... OYYY.

SAY, YOU'RE REALLY, TRULY 25? I FIGURED YOU WERE STILL AT SCHOOL. I CAN'T REALLY BELIEVE IT.

I'M NOT IN SCHOOL. I'M REALLY ONLY IN *LA* TO SPEND TIME WITH A SICK OLD FRIEND.

HEY, *LOOK!* WITH MONTEL. IT'S VIXEN LaBITCH. SHE IS *SOOOO* FUNNY. YOU EVER *SEEN* HER?

...PRANCING AROUND TELLING US THAT THE KID WAS NOT HIS SON. WELL, OBVIOUSLY-- IT WAS HIS BOY-FRIEND. AND BEAT IT?...

I'VE SEEN VIXEN'S ACT. I'M *NOT* A FAN.

SO. HOW SICK'S YOUR *FRIEND?*

PRETTY TERMINAL.

I'M SORRY.

ME TOO.

ROSE. LOOK, IF IT ISN'T A DUMB QUESTION, BUT WHAT DO YOU *DO*? I MEAN, YOU GOT A JOB OR SOMETHING?

NO. NOT A REAL JOB. MY FAMILY'S... WELL, MY MOM, REALLY--THERE'S AN AWFUL LOT OF MONEY. IT WAS INHERITED. FROM MY GRANDMOTHER.

I'M DOING SOME WRITING.

THAT'S KIND OF *FUNNY*.

LYTA FIGURED SHE WAS DOING YOU A FAVOR BY GETTING YOU TO BABYSIT AT FIVE BUCKS AN HOUR.

I KIND OF LIVE OFF A FAMILY THING TOO. WELL, IT'S A TRUST FUND.

The GOLDEN RLS Companion

BEWITC

Y'SEE, MY GRANDMA WAS CARMILLA BRISTOL.

WHO?

RECORD

ROSEANNE

CARMILLA BRISTOL.

SHE PLAYED, LIKE, EVERY BLACK LADIES' MAID IN EVERY CRAPPY HOLLYWOOD FILM MADE BETWEEN 1925 AND 1950. "NOW DERE, MISSY, YOU HUSH UP WID YO' CRYIN'."

SHE DIDN'T GET TO DEMONSTRATE MUCH DRAMATIC RANGE, BUT SHE HAD A GREAT EYE FOR A LAND DEAL.

ROSE-- CAN I USE YOUR PHONE? I'M GOING TO CALL THEM.

WHO?

FRIDAY AND GANNON. PINKERTON AND FELLOWES. ABBOTT AND COSTELLO. THE POLICE GOONS. THEY *SHOULD* HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU. TAKEN A STATEMENT AT LEAST.

THAT'S *FUNNY*. I COULDA *SWORN*...

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

THEY GAVE ME THE WRONG CARD.

DOESN'T IT HAVE THEIR PHONE NUMBER ON IT?

IT DOESN'T HAVE *ANYTHING* ON IT.

LOOK, I'LL GIVE YOU *MY* NUMBER. IF THE POLICE COME BY, OR IF LYTA SHOWS UP, YOU *CALL* ME, OKAY?

OF COURSE.

I JUST HOPE SHE HASN'T DONE ANYTHING *STUPID*.

HELLO?

IS ANYONE HERE?

HELLO?

I'VE BEEN TRAVELLING FOR A WHILE. I WONDERED IF I COULD HAVE SOME WATER, OR SOME FOOD. MAYBE SOMEWHERE TO SLEEP TONIGHT?

HELLO?

COME IN, SISTER. OF COURSE. COME IN.

HELLO.

ASK HER WHAT SHE'S HERE AFTER.

AS IF I'D NEVER THINK OF IT ON MY OWN. I WAS GOING TO ASK HER. JUST ABOUT TO.

WELL, GO ON. ASK HER.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR, GIRL?

I'M LOOKING FOR REVENGE. SOMEONE STOLE MY SON, AND KILLED HIM.

I WILL HAVE VENGEANCE.

I'M SEEKING THE FU-- THE KIND LADIES.

OUR SISTER DIED. BUT WE NEVER TOOK REVENGE.

WE KNEW THERE'D BE TROUBLE ONE DAY, HER BEING MORTAL. IT'S NOT AS IF WE NEVER SAID ANYTHING.

WE STILL MISS HER. WE STILL MOURN.

I'M SORRY.

I AM STHENO, DEARIE. THIS IS EURYALE.

HELLO. I'M LYTA.

YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY FOR A NIGHT, AND A DAY, AND ANOTHER NIGHT.

BUT WE DON'T HAVE ANY FOOD HERE.

WE HAD FOOD, WHEN OUR SISTER WAS WITH US.

BUT AFTER SHE WENT AWAY, IT WENT FOUL AND BRED FLIES, AND THEN IT BECAME DUST.

THERE'S WATER. PROPER WATER. ALL THE WATER YOU CAN DRINK, AND MORE.

THESE ARE LOVELY STATUES.

DID YOU CARVE THEM YOURSELVES?

OH, PLEASE.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE OUR SISTER?

SORRY?

HE CUT OFF HER HEAD. HE WAS A STRANGER. WE WANTED TO BURY IT WITH HER, BUT HE CARRIED IT OFF WITH HIM.

THERE SHOULD BE THREE OF US. YOU COULD BE THE MORTAL ONE.

DON'T CONFUSE THE POOR LOVE, EURYALE.

THERE ARE APPLES FOR YOUR SUPPER AT THE BOTTOM OF THE GARDEN. YOU'LL HAVE TO GET 'EM ON YOUR OWN. WE CAN'T GO WITH YOU -- IT'S NOT OUR GARDEN.

WOULD YOU LIKE AN APPLE?

SURE.

"IF YOU SEE AEGLE, ERYTHIA, AND ARETHUSA, BE NICE TO THEM. IT'S THEIR GARDEN."

"THE TREE IS AT THE TOP OF THE HILL."

EAT THAT APPLE-- LOSE SOME OF YOUR MORTALITY--BIT OF A WARNING--WORD TO THE WISE.

WHO-- WHO ARE YOU?

ARE YOU... SATAN?

NOT BLOODY LIKELY -- NAME OF GERYON--YOU ARE?

I'M LYTA. HIPPOLYTA HALL.

HIPPOLYTA -- ALSO ANTIOPE. QUEEN OF AMAZONS, GIVEN IN MARRIAGE BY HERCULES TO THESEUS.

HALL--A CORRIDOR. PLACE BETWEEN PLACES.

LYTA-- LESS DARK. YES?

I SUPPOSE. IT'S JUST A NAME.

ARE THESE THE APPLES FROM THE BIBLE?

THESE? NOT A BIT--QUITE USELESS FOR KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL-- MORE LIKE THE OTHER TREE -- YOU KNOW.

UH. NO.

QUESTION: WHY DID HE THROW THEM OUT?

WHO? WHAT?

NICE COUPLE -- FIG LEAVES-- ADAM, EVE.

OH. YES. I SEE.

WHY DID GOD EXPEL THEM FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN? BECAUSE THEY DISOBEYED HIM, I SUPPOSE.

NOT A BIT.

SCARED THEY WOULD FIND THE TREE OF LIFE NEXT, "AND EAT, AND LIVE FOR EVER." --GENESIS THREE, TWENTY-TWO.

TAKE APPLES, BY ALL MEANS-- I'M GUARDIAN -- TO BE HONEST, DON'T GIVE A TOSS WHO HAS THEM-- NO ONE EVER COMES HERE.

JUST ROT ON THE GROUND --WORMS GET THEM--PITY.

WORD TO THE WISE.

LADIES WHO *SENT* YOU DOWN HERE -- EURYALE -- STHENO -- STILL MISS THEIR SISTER, IF YOU GET MY DRIFT.

SLEEP IN THEIR HOUSE -- EAT THIS FOOD...

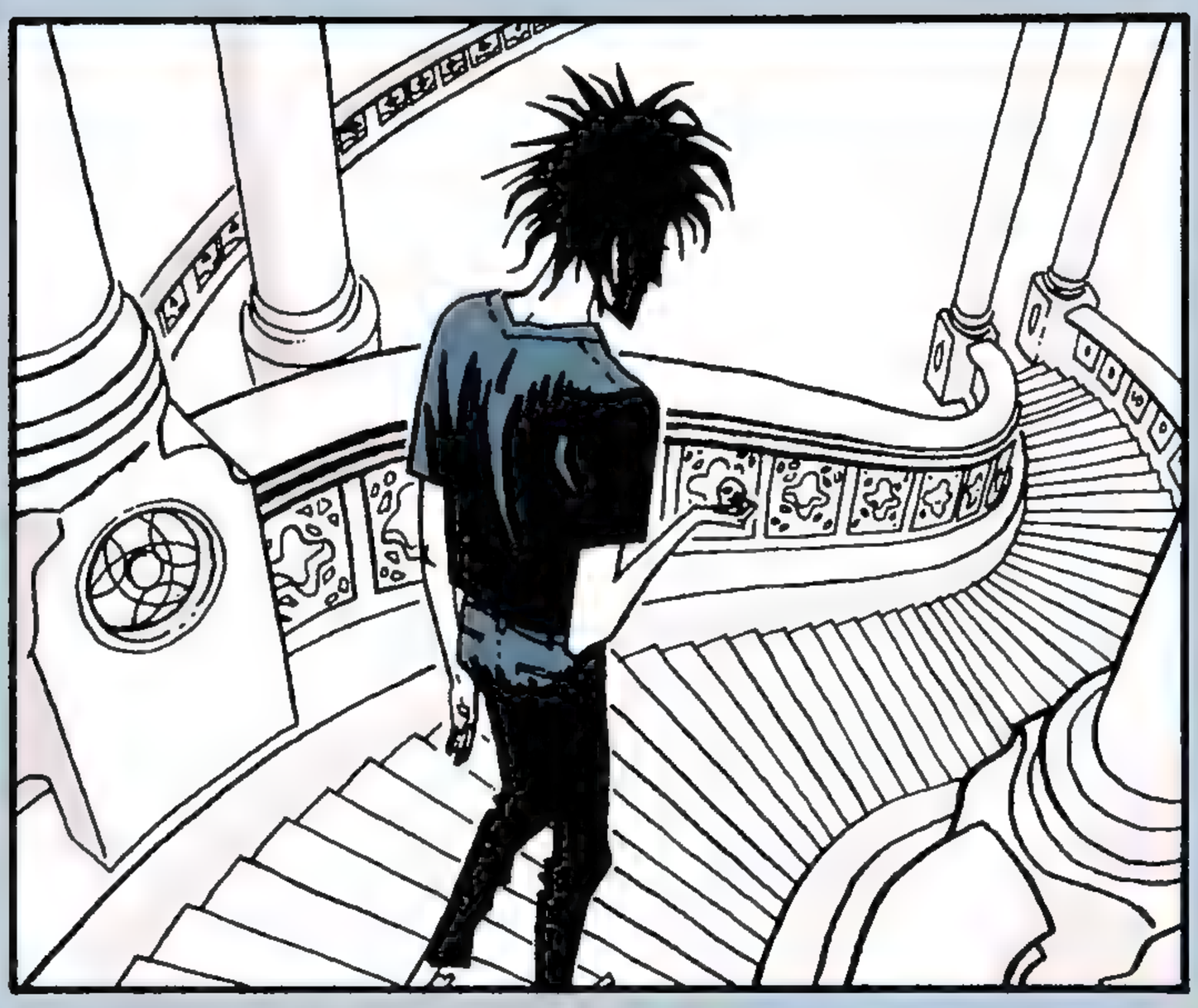
WELL -- WOULDN'T RECOMMEND IT, *THAT'S* ALL.

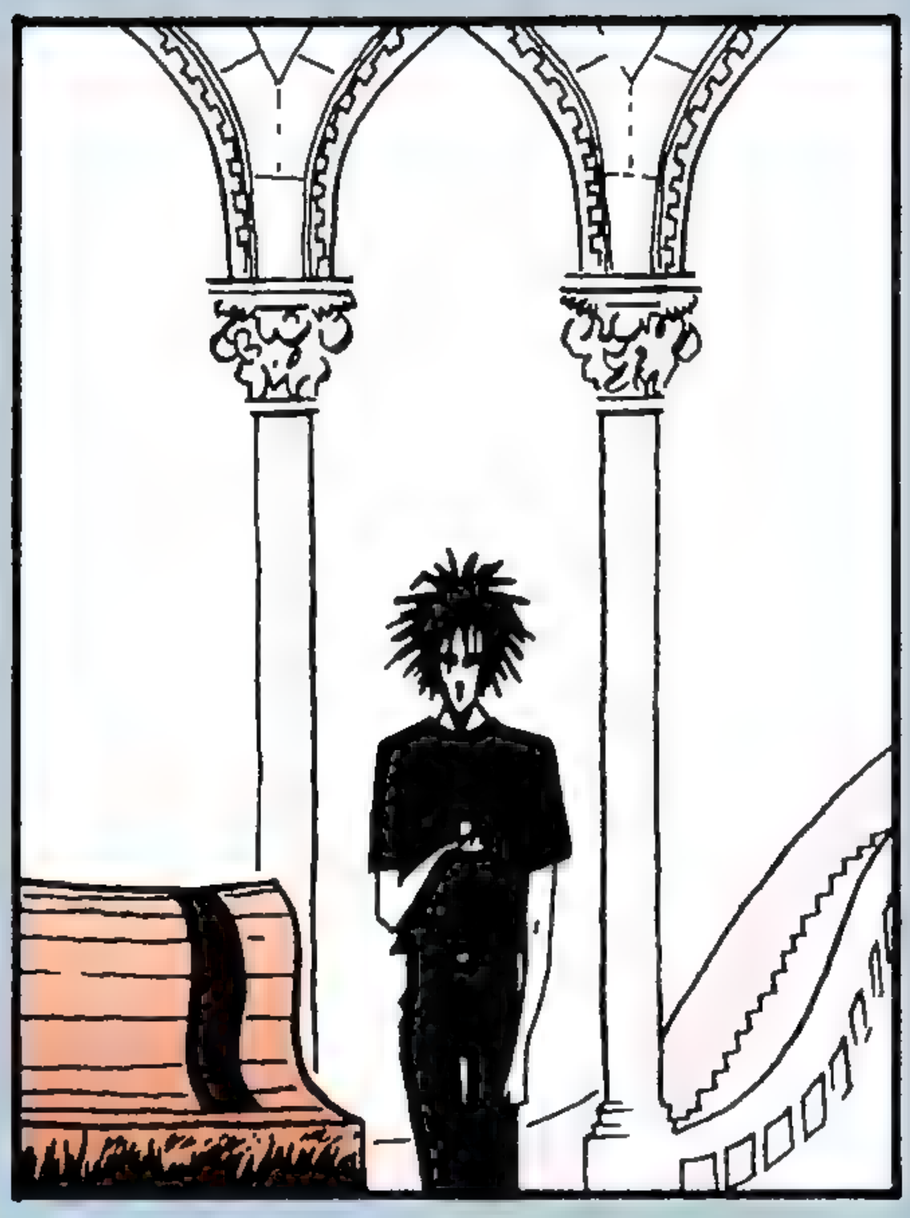
NOT RECOMMENDED -- THERE.

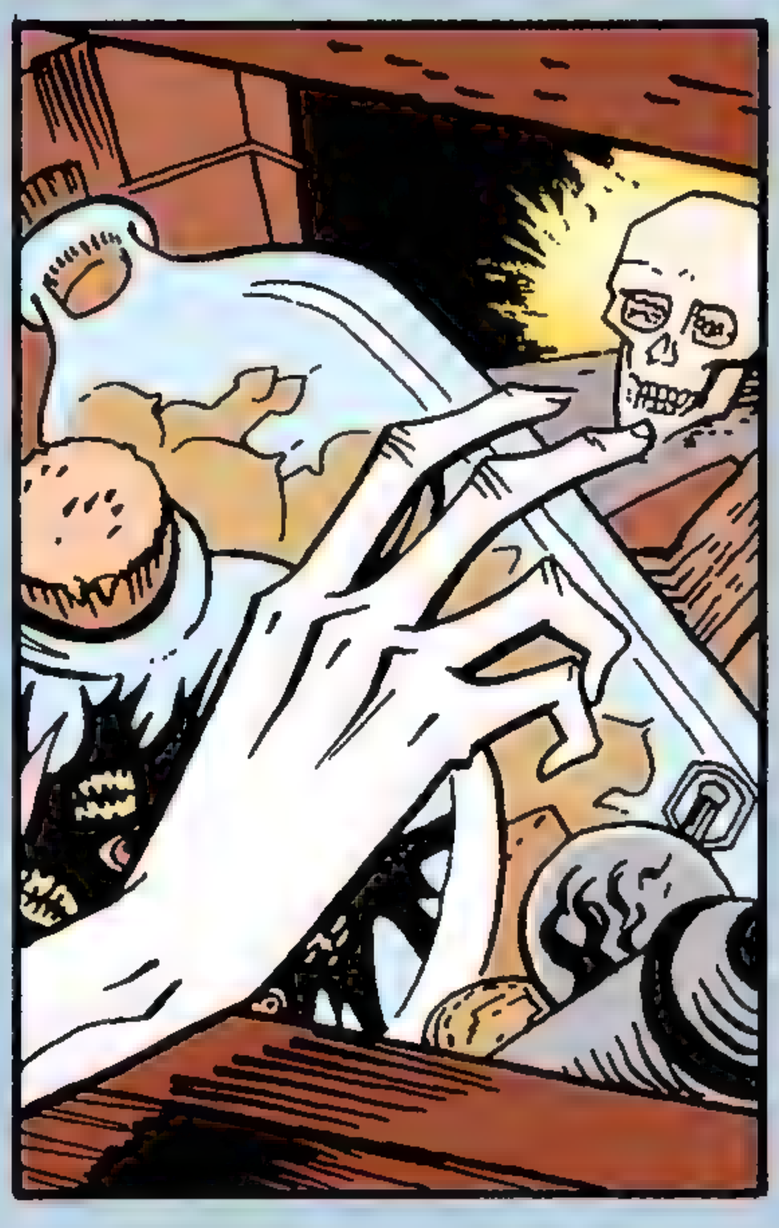
WORD TO THE WISE.

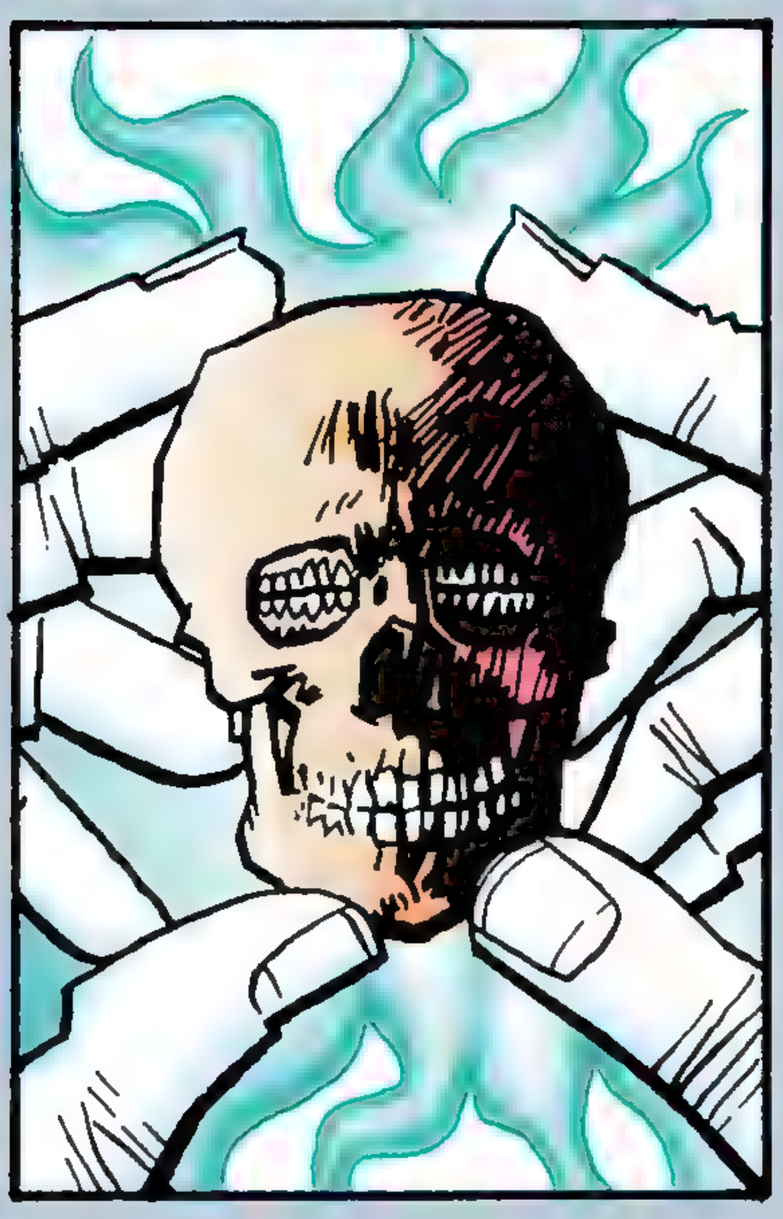
PAPER ONLY

=CHOMP=









Storms are coming.

HEY MATTHEW.

MERV. WHAT'S NEW?

SAME OLD SAME OLD. I'M ONE MAN SHORT ONNA CLEANING DETAIL, LIKE I AIN'T GOT ENOUGH TA WORRY ABOUT.

=phhhhht!=

YOU KNOW ABUDAH?

HI ABUDAH.

AYUH.

SO WHO'RE YOU MISSING?

YOU DIDN'T HEAR YET? THE ELF. THE BOSS SENT HER HOME.

NUALA'S GONE? PITY.

I DON'T KNOW. IT WASN'T EVEN AS IF I KNEW HER THAT WELL.

BUT WITH HER GONE, THE CASTLE FEELS LIKE A... I DON'T KNOW... A BOY'S CLUB.

PITY? WHY?

PHOOT!

SO? WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT THAT?

HELLO MATTHEW, MERVYN, ABUDAH.

AYUH.

HEEEY, LOOSH. KEEPIN' OUTTA TROUBLE?

TOLERABLY SO, THANK YOU, MERVYN. YOURSELF?

I'M ACES. HEY, I WAS JUS' TELLIN' MATTY HERE THAT THE ELF HAD HIGHTAILED IT, AN' HE WAS BITCHIN' AND MOANIN'.

I AGREE WITH MATTHEW.

I PARTICULARLY MISS HER LITTLE SONGS. YOU COULD HEAR THEM -- DISTANTLY -- ALL THE WAY DOWN THE CORRIDOR.

I RATHER ENJOYED THEM. QUITE A LOT, IN FACT.

WELL, I THINK YOU'RE ALL CRAZY. DAMES. WHO NEEDS 'EM?

MERV, YOU SAY SOME AMAZINGLY DUMB THINGS SOMETIMES.

NAH. I JUST CALL 'EM LIKE I SEE 'EM.

F'REXAMPLE, SAW THE FASHION THING, COUPLA DAYS BACK, WEARING A DRESS THAT LEFT ABSITIVELY NUTHIN' TO THE IMAGINATION. WOULDN'T CATCH ME DRESSIN' LIKE THAT.

AYUH.

NOPE. THEY AREN'T LIKE US.

WELL, THEY AREN'T LIKE YOU.

BRR. IT'S SO COLD...

YOU'RE TELLING ME.

OF COURSE, TALL, PALE AND INTERESTIN' STILL EXPECTS SOME OF US TO HAUL VOLCANOES ABOUT IN THIS KINDA WEATHER.

SO WHAT I WANT TO KNOW IS, WHAT CRAWLED UP HIS BUTT AND DIED?

I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT OUR LORD IS UNUSUALLY DISTURBED ABOUT ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR, MERVYN.

NO?

THEN WHAT'S THIS WEATHER ALL ABOUT THEN?

I TELL YA, I'VE NEVER KNOWN IT LIKE THIS.

UH, MERV...

FIRST YOU GET THE WINDS. THEN THE COLD. AND THEN THE SKY JUST KINDA SPITS, LIKE IT'S GOING TO RAIN, AND IT DOESN'T RAIN. AND THE CLOUDS ARE BLACK, AND THEY DON'T STORM, AND THEY DON'T RAIN, AND THEY DON'T GO AWAY.

MERV!

YOU ASK ME, HE'S HEADING FOR BIG TROUBLE. YA GOTTA LOVE HIM, SURE, BUT THE GUY'S A COMPLETE--

MERVYN!

A complete what, Mervyn?

A, UH. JUST A... COMPLETE, BOSS.

Completeness is a virtue, Mervyn, is it not?

HHEEEEH. WHATEVER.

BOSS.

Matthew. If I might intrude? I have need of you and Lucien.

UH. YES. SURE, BOSS.

Mervyn, Abudah. It was good to see you both.

UM. OUTTA HERE. NO REST FOR THE WICKED. MOHAMMED AIN'T GONNA COME TO THE MOUNTAIN, ALL THAT.

AYUH.

AAAARK! YOU MUSTN'T BE TOO HARD ON HIM.

Hard on him, Matthew?

WELL, FOR THE STUFF HE SAYS ABOUT YOU. HE CAN BE SORT OF OFFENSIVE...

It has always been the prerogative of children and half-wits to point out that the emperor has no clothes.

But the half-wit remains a half-wit, and the emperor remains an emperor.

HE'S A VERY CONSCIENTIOUS WORKER. I THINK IT'S JUST THE WEATHER THAT HAS HIM ON EDGE, LORD.

It has us all on edge, Lucien.

BUT, BOSS, I THOUGHT YOU MADE THE WEATHER HERE. I THOUGHT YOU MADE EVERY-THING HERE.

This place is an aspect of part of me, Matthew. That is true.

However, I am also, to some extent, an aspect of this place. That should not be forgotten.

IF YOU SAY SO, BOSS.

Do you follow me, Matthew?

'FRAID YOU LOST ME A COUPLA MILES BACK, BOSS.

It is nearly completed. What do you think?

IT LOOKS...LIKE THE *LAST* ONE DID. IT LOOKS-- OKAY.

Yes.

Now: Live.

THANK YOU, MY LORD. IT IS GOOD TO LIVE ONCE MORE.

I AWAIT YOUR COMMAND.

HA!

— TO BE CONTINUED —

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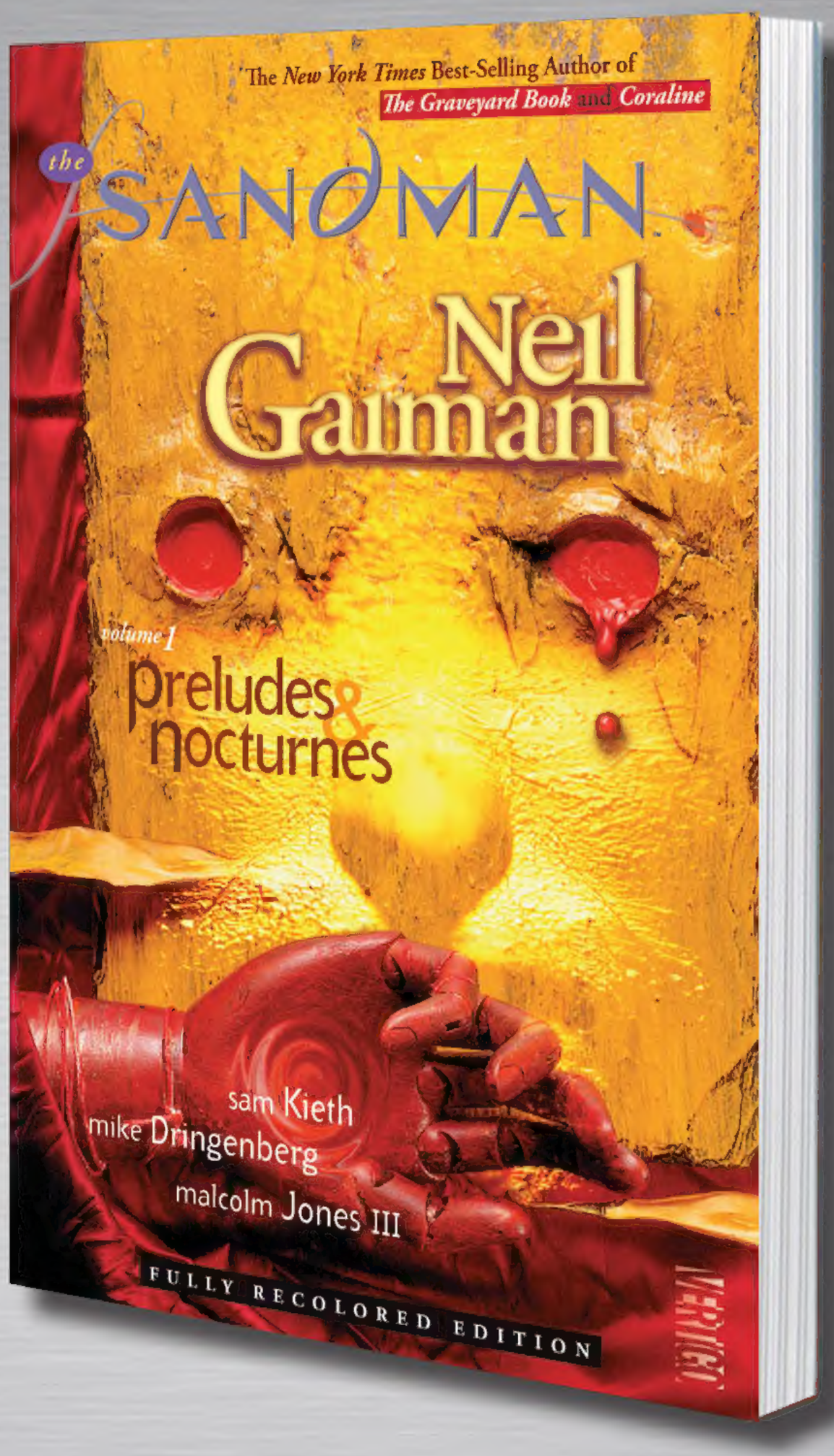

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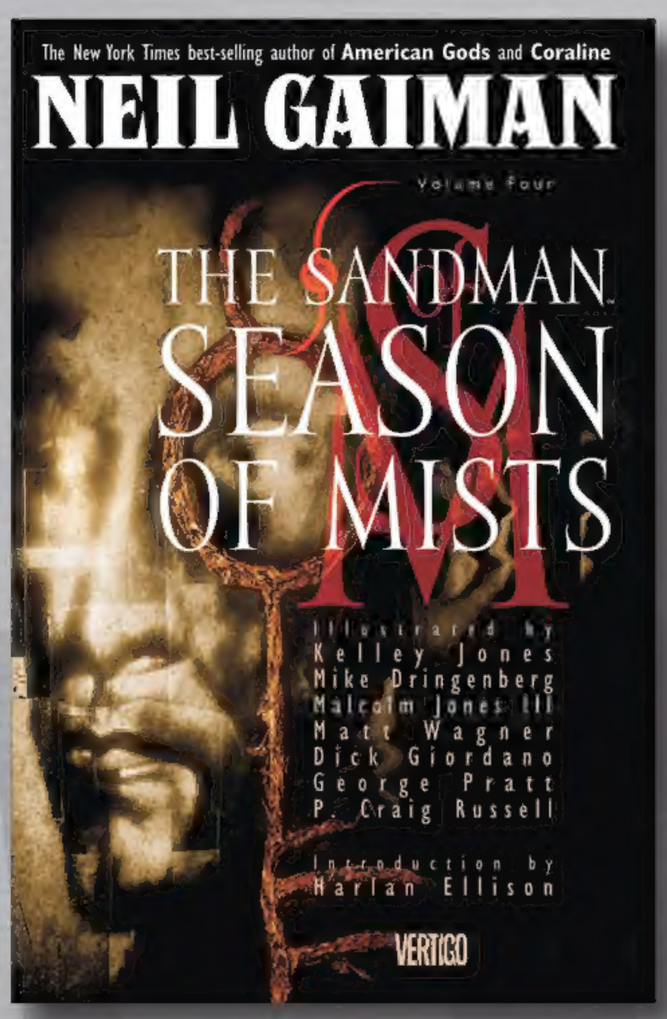

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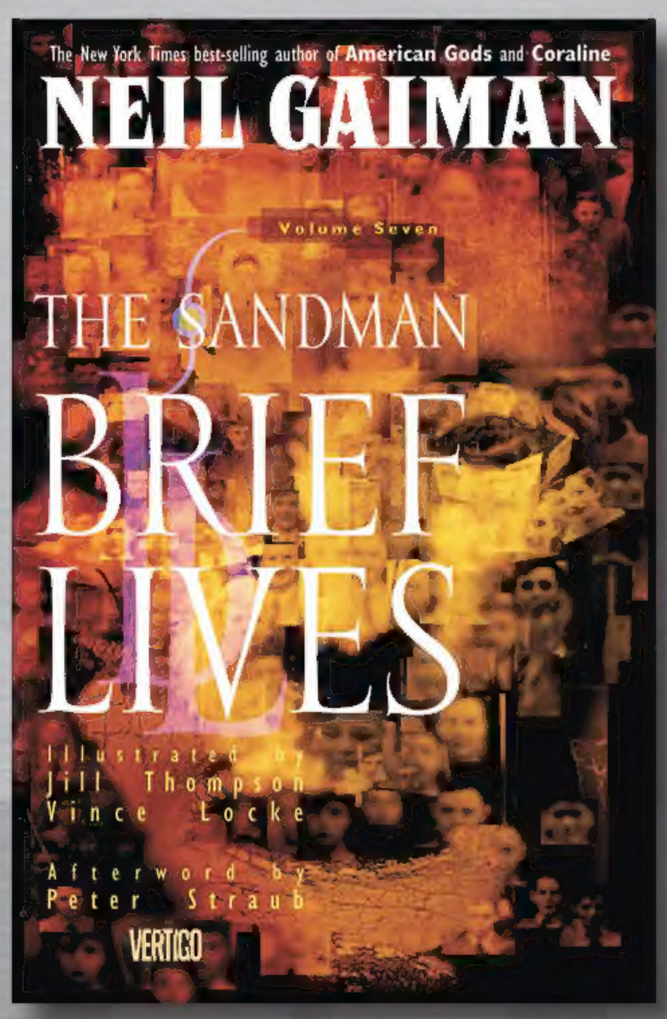

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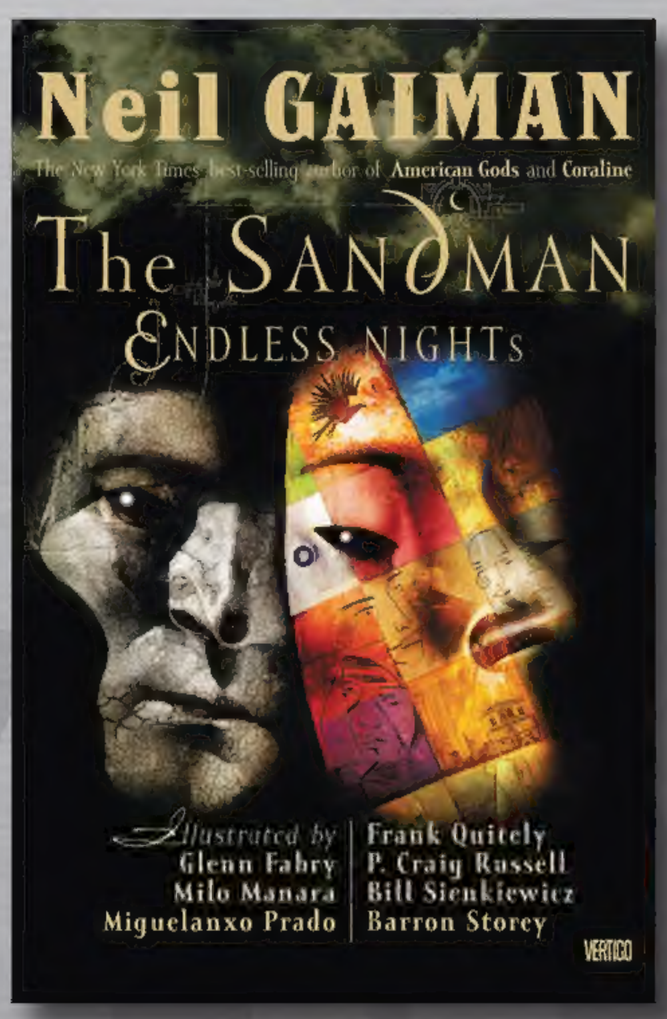

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